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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 25 September 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Election of Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur

1. **Mr. Kazhura** (Belarus) and **Mr. Morales** (Spain) nominated Dr. Grčič Polič (Croatia) and Mr. Vassallo (Malta), respectively, for the posts of Vice-Chairman.

2. *Dr. Grčič Polič (Croatia) and Mr. Vassallo (Malta) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.*

Election of the Rapporteur

3. **Mr. Salamanca** (Bolivia) nominated Mr. Miyamoto (Japan) for the post of Rapporteur.

4. *Mr. Miyamoto (Japan) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

5. *Mr. Miyamoto (Japan), Rapporteur, took a place at the Committee table.*

Agenda item 18: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (A/55/23 (Part II), chapters VI, IX-XI; A/55/23 (Part III), chapter XIII (D-F, H); A/AC.109/2000/2-10; A/AC.109/2000/13-18)

Agenda item 88: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73*e* of the Charter of the United Nations (A/55/23 (Part II), chapter VIII; A/55/23 (Part III), chapter XIII (A); A/55/77 and Add.1)

Agenda item 89: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/55/23 (Part II), chapter V; A/55/23 (Part III), chapter XIII (B))

Agenda item 90: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/55/23 (Part II), chapter VII; A/55/23 (Part III), chapter XIII (C); A/55/72 and Corr.1; A/C.4/55/CRP.1; E/2000/68)

Agenda item 91: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/55/81 and Add.1)

6. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur of the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, speaking under agenda items 18, 88, 89, 90, 12 and 91, introduced the report of the Special Committee on its work during 2000 (A/55/23). The Special Committee's recommendations were set out in Part III of the report.

7. During the period under review, the Special Committee had continued to fulfil the tasks assigned to it by the General Assembly, guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the objectives of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 54/91 of 6 December 1999, in which the Special Committee was requested to continue to seek suitable means for the immediate and full implementation of the Declaration. The Special Committee had also continued to examine the implementation by Member States, particularly the administering Powers, of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and of other relevant resolutions on decolonization. The Special Committee had also reviewed the situation in the Territories on the basis of working papers prepared by the Secretariat which contained information provided by the administering Powers under Article 73*e* of the Charter. Important information had also been provided by representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and experts who had participated in the Special Committee's meetings and regional seminars.

8. In response to a request from the General Assembly, the Committee had continued to pay special attention to the small Territories which faced unique problems owing to their small geographic and demographic size, limited natural resources and vulnerability to ecological disasters. The international community should respond to their needs and requests for assistance, and in that connection, the programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations played a particularly important role. The Special Committee urged the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to study the conditions in the Territories so that the necessary steps could be taken to accelerate economic and social progress.

9. The Special Committee once again noted that United Nations visiting missions were an effective way of assessing the situation in the Territories and called on the administering Powers to cooperate with the

United Nations by receiving its visiting missions in the Territories under their administration.

10. Regarding the dissemination of information, he said that the Special Committee acknowledged the importance of informing the world public about the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization and called on the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information to continue their efforts through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet. The Special Committee noted with satisfaction the creation in the past year of a website on decolonization containing the texts of resolutions, working papers on each of the Territories and press releases on the work of the Special Committee and the United Nations.

11. In considering the question of economic and other activities which affected the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the Special Committee had, inter alia, reaffirmed the right of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to the enjoyment of their natural resources and their right to dispose of them in their best interests, as well as the need to avoid any economic or other activities which adversely affected their interests. In that connection, the Special Committee had affirmed the value of foreign economic investment for the socio-economic development of the Territories and the responsibility of the administering Powers to promote the advancement of the Territories, and urged those Powers to take effective measures to safeguard the natural resources and protect the property rights of the peoples of the Territories.

12. In 2000, the Special Committee had continued to consider the question of military activities and arrangements by colonial Powers in the Territories under their administration. It had reaffirmed its strong conviction that military bases and installations in such Territories could constitute an obstacle to the exercise by the people of those Territories of their right to self-determination and had urged the administering Powers to take all necessary measures not to involve the Territories in any offensive acts or interference against other States.

13. During the period under review, the Special Committee had devoted particular attention to the implementation of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The participants in the Pacific Regional Seminar, held at Majuro, Marshall Islands, from 16 to 18 May 2000, had concluded that the International Decade had been an important political framework for concerted action in support of the process of decolonization and the role of the United Nations in that process. They had also expressed the view that throughout the International Decade, the regional seminars had served as an effective forum for focused discussion on matters of concern to the Non-Self-Governing Territories and had afforded opportunities for representatives of the peoples of the Territories to present their views and recommendations to the Special Committee. The conclusions and recommendations of the seminar were contained in an annex to the report of the Special Committee.

14. During the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, some progress had been made with decolonization, but much remained to be done. The Special Committee accordingly proposed that the period 2001-2010 should be declared the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. In that connection, it recommended that the General Assembly should call upon Member States to redouble their efforts to implement the Plan of Action contained in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General dated 13 December 1991, which was to serve as the plan of action for the Second Decade. The Special Committee also recommended that the General Assembly call upon the administering Powers to fully cooperate with the Special Committee to develop a constructive programme of work on a case-by-case basis for the Non-Self-Governing Territories to facilitate the implementation of the mandate of the Special Committee and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations on decolonization, including resolutions on specific Territories.

15. The Special Committee had recalled that 2000 marked the fortieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and proposed that the General Assembly devote one of its plenary meetings to a solemn commemoration of that event.

16. **Mr. Donigi** (Papua New Guinea), Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, said that as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism drew to a close, the Special Committee

was seeking not only to carry out its programme of work but also to review its achievements and identify tasks for the future. It had accomplished a great deal in establishing more active relations with the administering Powers and enhancing and expanding its contacts with representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

17. Despite the progress made in decolonization since 1960, the process was far from finished. The United Nations and the international community as a whole had an obligation to facilitate the speedy completion of the decolonization process, for which cooperation among the administering Powers was essential. France and New Zealand continued unconditionally to provide support in matters relating to New Caledonia and Tokelau. Portugal was participating in the discussions on East Timor. All possible steps were being taken to re-establish a constructive dialogue with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America concerning the Territories under their administration. In informal meetings devoted to American Samoa and Pitcairn, it had been agreed that matters relating to those Territories would be considered on a case-by-case basis and that a specific work programme would be prepared for each of them. The Special Committee had drawn up a general work programme that would serve as a reference for work programmes for individual Territories. A general work programme had been agreed upon as a starting point for discussions on American Samoa with the delegation of the United States of America.

18. Every effort must be made to cooperate closely with representatives of the Territories and to ensure that their views were taken into account. Members of the Special Committee received information on the situation in each Territory on the basis of data provided by the administering Powers under Article 73*e* of the Charter and from working papers prepared every year by the Secretariat, but the information given by representatives of the Territories themselves at meetings of the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee and at the regional seminars organized annually by the Special Committee was particularly useful.

19. During the past year, members of the Special Committee had had the opportunity to hear the views of representatives of the Territories, experts, Member States and non-governmental organizations at the Pacific Regional Seminar held in Majuro, the capital of the Marshall Islands. Discussion at the Seminar had covered constitutional and legal issues as well as the political, social and economic problems of the Territories. Special attention had been given to the problems faced by the majority of small island Territories owing to their small geographical and demographic size, remoteness, lack of natural resources, limited domestic markets and vulnerability to natural disasters. Consideration had been given to the possibility of using the economic vulnerability index currently being developed by the South Pacific Geo-science Commission for determining the needs of small island Territories.

20. The Economic and Social Council, the regional commissions and the specialized agencies were supporting decolonization, but more cooperative efforts were needed to place the social and economic needs of Non-Self-Governing Territories fully on the agenda of the United Nations. It should be recalled that some Territories participated as associate members in the regional economic commissions and thus had an opportunity to take part, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, in world conferences and other important events.

21. In recommending that the General Assembly declare the period 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the Special Committee recognized that much remained to be done. Two weeks previously, the heads of State and Government participating in the Millennium Summit in New York had acknowledged the importance of eradicating colonialism by proclaiming in the Millennium Declaration their support for all efforts to uphold the right to self-determination of peoples which remained under colonial domination and foreign occupation.

General debate

22. **Mr. Donigi** (Papua New Guinea) said that many Non-Self-Governing Territories were categorized as tax havens or offshore financial centres. Some were being subjected to growing pressure from the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Community. In reality, such Territories should indeed be considered offshore financial centres in view of the broad range of financial and other services they provided, services that were the consequence of legislation to that effect

adopted by the members of OECD and the European Community.

23. While joint efforts to combat criminal activities such as money laundering and direct and indirect tax evasion should be deemed desirable, there was no foundation for the notion that such offshore financial centres were in reality waging tax wars to the detriment of the legitimate interests of members of OECD. Competition in tax matters was salutary in itself. The Governments of countries where such centres were located, including Non-Self-Governing Territories, were preserving their interests and those of the international community by providing tax-free or reduced-tax conditions for global business and capital investment. OECD's response to fiscal competition had been to attempt to organize a tax cartel on the grounds that all countries stood to gain by participating in such a global cartel. The veracity of that argument depended in the first instance on participation by all countries and secondly on worldwide agreement on the grounds for taxation. While some countries might be inclined to join a cartel if they were promised a percentage of tax revenues, others might decide that the more cartels there were, the more revenues there would be for those who did not join them.

24. The United Nations should turn its attention to such problems faced by Non-Self-Governing Territories. The members of OECD and the European Community must not force such Territories to join their tax cartels if they did not so wish, and their right of choice must not be flouted under false pretexts of pernicious tax competition.

25. **Mr. Sheng Guofang** (China) said that at the dawn of the new millennium, maintaining world peace and promoting worldwide development had become the joint pursuit of humanity. Member States should accordingly attach importance to the interests of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories and help them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and to achieve the total eradication of colonialism throughout the world. The Committee bore a special responsibility in that connection.

26. Progress in decolonization hinged on the realization of the right to self-determination of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which required the joint efforts of the United Nations, the peoples of those Territories and the administering Powers. The first International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had yielded encouraging advances, but colonialism still existed. That was why, on 20 July 2000, the Special Committee had adopted a resolution calling for the period 2001-2010 to be declared the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism by the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. The Chinese delegation warmly endorsed that proposal and called on the administering Powers, the United Nations and the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to cooperate more effectively with a view to creating the necessary conditions for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination.

27. An effective means of making known the will of those peoples was the dissemination of information on decolonization and the holding of regional seminars on the topic with the participation, inter alia, of representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and sufficient attention should be devoted to such measures. In that connection, his delegation expressed the hope that the administering Powers would ensure that the peoples of the Territories knew all their rights, provide them with the necessary information in a timely manner, adopt a more active attitude and accept United Nations visiting missions to the Territories under their administration. His delegation called on the administering Powers to promote coordinated economic and social development in such Territories while protecting their natural and human resources.

28. In the past year, the Special Committee had reviewed the medium-term plan for 2002-2005, emphasizing improved dissemination of information and highlighting the final goals of decolonization. It had held the successful Pacific Regional Seminar and had carried out consultations on specific Non-Self-Governing Territories with their administering Powers. Such actions had demonstrated the Special Committee's determination to promote decolonization in a more active and pragmatic way. The Chinese delegation would continue to participate actively in the work of the United Nations in that field and to cooperate closely with other States in an effort to fulfil the objectives set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

29. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, proclaimed

in 1990, had not fulfilled all the hopes that had surrounded it. Despite the fact that the people of East Timor had acceded to independence in 1999, 16 colonial Territories remained on the Special Committee's list, awaiting assistance from the international community in fulfilling their legitimate right to self-determination in accordance with the objectives of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, whose fortieth anniversary was being commemorated in 2000. The declaration at the current session of a new International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would demonstrate the international community's solidarity with the peoples who remained under colonial occupation.

30. The people of Western Sahara, which had always relied on the Special Committee's support in its struggle, must be able to count on the solidarity of its members and their readiness to help it to realize its rights in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the General Assembly. The Special Committee must use all its political and moral authority to bring to a close the process begun in Western Sahara and to ensure the realization of the right to self-determination of the people of that region. In his report to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General had given a slightly different assessment of prospects for progress in the implementation of the settlement plan: doubts were thus gradually replacing the optimism engendered by the Houston agreements.

31. A year after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 54/87 of 6 December 1999, major advances had been made in the implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) had completed its identification of all candidates entitled to vote in the referendum. In addition to persons belonging to "contested" tribal groups whose identification had been made possible by the compromise reached by the two parties in May 1999, the identification process had been completed for 198 000 applicants to date and the United Nations had published a preliminary list of 86 368 voters. At the same time, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had completed the registration of 120 000 refugees for inclusion in the list of voters.

32. Progress had been achieved through the cooperation of the two parties to the dispute, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Rio de Oro (POLISARIO), and the work done by MINURSO, particularly the Identification Commission. It had slowed to a standstill in recent months, however, and neither the London meetings under the auspices of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, James Baker III, nor the meetings of experts held in July 2000 in Geneva had resolved the problems connected with the appeals process. Following the publication of the preliminary list of voters, over 135,000 appeals had been received from candidates rejected by MINURSO at the identification stage, and that threatened to nullify all the work done by the Identification Commission. It was unfortunate that the strong requests made by the Secretary-General in his report prepared in April 1999 and by the Security Council in its resolutions 1238 (1999) of 14 May 1999 and 1263 (1999) of 13 September 1999 had not been heeded.

33. In view of the current impasse in the peace process in Western Sahara, the Committee should express its most resolute support for the settlement plan and work for the renewal of the process and the holding of a free and impartial referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. In order to eliminate any obstacles to such an outcome, both parties must cooperate with the Secretary-General, his Personal Envoy and his Special Representative.

34. The Algerian people, which had paid a heavy price for fulfilling its right to self-determination, had always supported the right of the people of Western Sahara to decide its own fate, a right given substance in the Charter of the United Nations, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and General Assembly resolution 40/50 of 2 December 1985. As an official observer to the peace process in Western Sahara, Algeria would continue to assist the United Nations and MINURSO in every way with a view to the speedy resolution of the conflict.

35. **Mr. Powles** (New Zealand) said that as an administering Power, New Zealand was pleased to report on the further progress made by Tokelau over the past year towards a fuller measure of self-government. The development of self-government in Tokelau presented a special challenge because it was hardly a typical example of decolonization. It must be recalled that Tokelau consisted of three atolls, each no

more than 200 metres wide and never more that 5 metres above sea level. Some 1,500 people lived in three villages on the atolls. Administrative control over Tokelau had been transferred to New Zealand in 1926 at the initiative of the Government of the United Kingdom.

36. The challenge for Tokelau at the start of the new millennium was to find the means to express itself as a nation. Traditional village leaders remained at the centre of political life, but today they had to be equipped with modern techniques of governance as well as traditional ones. In 2000, Tokelau had unequivocally informed the United Nations that its population was moving resolutely forward to build the so-called "modern house", a modern self-governance system. That determination had been reflected in the resolution adopted without a vote by the Special Committee on 12 July 2000. The resolution was currently before the General Assembly in the form of a recommendation from the Special Committee. It reflected Tokelau's view that the "modern house" project was the means to achieve self-determination.

37. Within the "modern house" project, the political authority of traditional leaders was to be recognized and practical arrangements for the governance of Tokelau were to be addressed. The idea of self-governance remained largely foreign to Tokelauans, although some progress had been made in developing a capacity for national government through the constitutional programme being carried out by New Zealand and Tokelau since 1992. Experience had shown that national government could take root only with the full confidence of the people. The "modern house" project provided precisely the reassurance needed. In many respects, building the "modern house" and drafting the constitution of Tokelau were one and the same process.

38. The focus now was very much on practical measures, including the development of management structures, the transfer to Tokelau of responsibility for human resource management, the formation of a civil service, capacity development and sustainable development planning. A draft programme of work through mid-2001 had been prepared. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was seeking to ensure that its programmes in support of governance and sustainable development complemented the programmes financed by New Zealand. Two UNDP representatives and a representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) were currently in Tokelau to observe the consultations being held in the three villages.

39. Concerning the time frame for achievement of self-determination in Tokelau, he drew attention to the resolution of the Special Committee, which noted Tokelau's desire to move in that direction at its own pace. The collaborative efforts now under way would produce clearer guidance as to a feasible time frame. New Zealand was responding to Tokelau's needs by providing substantial additional funding through official development assistance (ODA). The agreed programme for Tokelau for 2000-2001 totalled 8,500,000 New Zealand dollars, of which $NZ 4,500,000 was to support self-government while $NZ 900,000 was earmarked specifically for the "modern house" project.

40. **Mr. Dausa Cespedes** (Cuba) said that decolonization was one of the most important achievements in the history of the United Nations. Following the adoption in 1960 of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, over 60 countries had acceded to independence. Yet today, as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism drew to a close, the register of Non-Self-Governing Territories remained virtually unchanged, with 17 Territories still listed. In that context his delegation could not be satisfied with the outcome of efforts to implement the Plan of Action adopted in General Assembly resolution 46/181 of 19 December 1991. The reasons given for the limited success achieved in that field sometimes included such factors as the size and population of the Territories under colonial rule. But such an outlook was unacceptable, given that the inalienable right to self-determination and independence of the peoples of those Territories was universal in nature. Equally unacceptable were the attempts of some Powers to disregard the right to independence by supplanting it with the right to self-determination, whereas the realization of the right to self-determination and accession to independence could not be dissociated.

41. For a number of years the Special Committee had been periodically reviewing its working methods with a view to heightening their effectiveness which, together with the efficiency of its work, depended not only on the will and efforts of its members, but also on cooperation from the administering Powers. Although a

spirit of constructive cooperation and dialogue prevailed within the Committee, some administering Powers continued to refuse to establish official and effective relations with it and were creating various obstacles to its work. It was difficult to recall the last time a visiting mission had been sent to a Non-Self-Governing Territory, even though such missions were an ideal means of gathering information about the economic, political and social situation in the Territories. Some administering Powers continued not to provide up-to-date information on the Territories under their control. Some administering Powers continued to carry out military activities in the Territories under their jurisdiction, to the detriment of the rights and interests of the residents. Some administering Powers continued not to make rational use of the natural resources of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, thereby infringing the spirit and letter of General Assembly resolution 2621 (XXV) of 12 October 1970.

42. Cuba considered that regional seminars on decolonization not only provided a better understanding of the real situation in the Territories under colonial rule but also partially compensated for the lack of cooperation on the part of some administering Powers and facilitated the development of a conceptual framework for the Committee's work. One such example was the Pacific Regional Seminar held at Majuro, Marshall Islands. Much remained to be done in terms of disseminating information and raising public awareness about decolonization, but one major step forward had been the recent creation of a website on decolonization.

43. As for the question of Puerto Rico, the efforts of Cuba with the support of other delegations had facilitated the adoption of a number of resolutions acknowledging that State's inalienable right to self-determination and independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960. Cuba expressed once again its commitment to the cause of independence and self-determination for the fraternal country of Puerto Rico which, even after over 100 years of suffering, retained its identity as a Latin American nation.

44. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the success of decolonization in New Caledonia and Tokelau and the fact that during the nationwide referendum of 30 August 1999, the people of East Timor had been able to fulfil its right to self-determination. Cuba was following with great interest the progress of events in Western Sahara and hoped that the parties concerned would give practical effect to the agreements reached. The only way to resolve the conflict in that region was to hold a fair and impartial referendum and to carry out scrupulously the settlement plan, the Houston agreements and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Cuba espoused the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the dispute over sovereignty in the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and considered that a lasting, peaceful and just resolution of that problem could be achieved solely through dialogue and cooperation among the parties. Referring to the need to respect the rights and interests of the people of Guam, he called on the administering Power to cooperate and implement the relevant resolutions adopted by the Special Committee and the General Assembly.

45. **Mr. Valdivieso** (Columbia), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said its members endorsed the Committee's decision to recommend to the General Assembly that it declare the period 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, since it had proved impossible to implement the Plan of Action for the Decade that was ending in 2000. The Rio Group called on the administering Powers to cooperate with the Special Committee and provide precise and up-to-date information in accordance with Article 73 of the Charter. It likewise called on the administering Powers to work actively with the Special Committee to develop a constructive programme of work on a case-by-case basis for the small Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Group had a high opinion of the New Zealand's actions as the administering Power of Tokelau and noted France's cooperation with the Special Committee in connection with the important process that had been launched in New Caledonia. It called on the administering Powers to take effective measures to guarantee the inalienable right of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to their natural resources and freely to establish and maintain control over the future development of those resources. The creation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the regions attached to them of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones free of other weapons of mass destruction was equally important.

46. The regional seminar held in May 2000 in the Marshall Islands had yielded information of value for the future work of the United Nations. The Rio Group attached great importance to the holding of such seminars and to the creation of the other mechanisms used by the Special Committee. The seminar had reconfirmed the fact that the specific features of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must not impede the realization by the resident population of its inalienable right to self-determination on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee. Visiting missions must be organized periodically to assess the situation in the colonial Territories.

47. Concerning the Organization's future work, all existing resources and flexible mechanisms must be mobilized to permit each Territory to find the most acceptable solution in the light of its specific colonial situation. The cooperation of the administering Powers must be reliable and consistent and the specialized agencies and international organizations must continue to assist in the development of the Territories. One of the key elements in the process was the dissemination by the United Nations of information on decolonization. The Department of Public Information had created a web page on decolonization on which the international community could find up-to-date information and relevant documentation.

48. The Rio Group was concerned over the continuing acts of violence in East Timor, in particular the recent attack on a refugee camp in which three UNHCR officials had been killed. The Group endorsed the measures adopted by the United Nations to expand the direct participation of the East Timorese population in the governance of the Territory. The international community should shoulder the responsibility for continuing support for that process so as to guarantee the future development of the East Timorese population.

49. The Rio Group welcomed the important work done by the United Nations in Western Sahara. The conditions must be created for the people of Western Sahara to realize its right to self-determination, as envisaged in the Charter, on the basis of a free and impartial referendum to be held in the near future in which the population of the Territory would decide its fate.

50. The Rio Group also thought that the Governments of the Argentine Republic and of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland should renew negotiations with a view to the speedy achievement of a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the dispute over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

51. **Mr. Fonseca Jr.** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the members of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), reaffirmed their support for the realization of the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. On 5 June 1999, the presidents of members of MERCOSUR and of Bolivia and Chile had noted that a promising dialogue had begun between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom, yet at a meeting in Brasilia from 31 August to 1 September 2000, the presidents of the Latin American countries had stated that in the southern Atlantic Ocean, in the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), colonialism still existed. Convinced that the continuation of colonialism was incompatible with the ideals of peace, security and cooperation on the American continent, the presidents of the Latin American countries had agreed on the need to renew negotiations between the two parties with a view to the speedy achievement of a solution to the sovereignty dispute on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

52. **Mr. Marsh** (United States of America) said that although his country continued to believe that the standards applied in General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV) were too narrow, it offered its full support to countries that chose independence. For territories that did not choose independence, the United States of America fully supported the right of the peoples of those Non-Self-Governing Territories to a full measure of self-government, if that was what they chose. His country did not believe that a single standard of decolonization applied to every territory.

53. At the close of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, tremendous political, economic and social progress was occurring in the lives of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. For his country, the term "non-self-governing" was of questionable applicability to those who were able to establish their own constitution, elected their own public officers, had representation in

Washington, D.C. and chose their own economic path. The people of Puerto Rico, for example, had exercised its right to self-determination under international law when it had chosen commonwealth status in 1953. It continued, however, to exercise an effective right of self-determination through referendums under the domestic law of the United States of America, the most recent held only two years ago, in 1998.

54. The mere presence of outside economic and military interests in Non-Self-Governing Territories was not detrimental to the interests of such Territories or their peoples. On the contrary, such relationships formed the basis of partnership between individual regions and the outside world. Investment and economic activity did not necessarily constitute an obstacle to independence. His country's hope for the coming year was that the Special Committee would focus its efforts on the territories included in the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories and not be side-tracked by other issues.

55. **Mr. Snoussi** (Morocco) said that the item on the Sahara should not have been placed on the Committee's agenda, for a number of reasons. It was common knowledge that Morocco had acquired its southern territories, known as Western Sahara, by a decision of the International Court of Justice and in accordance with the Madrid agreements which had essentially put an end to the colonial dependence of Western Sahara. The question of Western Sahara was accordingly no longer a decolonization affair and the Fourth Committee should have refrained from considering it. The referendum on self-determination which had been initiated by the Kingdom of Morocco would give all the inhabitants of Western Sahara the opportunity to express themselves on the future of that territory.

56. The preparations for the referendum had reached a deadlock, however, and the work of MINURSO had been virtually halted for the entire past year. The difficulties were linked primarily to voter identification, repatriation of refugees and many other problems on which the Secretary-General had provided information in all of his recent reports. According to the settlement plan agreed upon by the two parties and endorsed by the Security Council, the basic principle was to ensure the participation in the referendum of all residents of Western Sahara. A whole series of irregularities had been committed in the process of voter identification, mainly involving the rejection of a number of candidates as not having the right to vote. To enable those individuals to take part in the referendum on an equal footing with others, the settlement plan had envisaged the conduct of oral interviews with all persons living in the territories but who had not been taken into account by Spain in 1974. From the very start of the identification process, however, the oral interviews had been transformed into a means of rejecting candidates not on the list. The Houston agreements had shown the way toward renewal of the identification process, but tension had risen anew when candidates from "contested" tribal groups had lodged a great many appeals of the Identification Commission's decisions.

57. The Kingdom of Morocco had clearly outlined its position on numerous aspects of the realization of the settlement plan and had expressed a number of reservations thereto. In Morocco's view, decisions on the admissibility of appeals must give each appellant a chance for a second review of his or her candidacy, with the object of elucidating circumstances which had been unknown at the time of the initial review.

58. Another important problem was related to the repatriation of Western Saharans who were currently in refugee camps in Tindouf. Morocco remained deeply concerned about the fate in those camps of Western Saharans who were deprived of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The international community should intensify its efforts with a view to repatriating the Western Saharan refugees who had already been identified and registered. Morocco, for its part, was prepared to give the competent international organizations all possible assistance in that matter.

59. In its resolution 1309 (2000) of 25 July 2000, the Security Council had authorized James Baker III to organize direct talks in order to break the stalemate in the implementation of the settlement plan. The Kingdom of Morocco would participate in the talks and would support the efforts of James Baker III and the Secretary-General in every way so that he could continue to seek ways of putting an end to an artificially manufactured situation which was hampering development and undermining stability in the region.

60. **Mr. Obadi** (Yemen) said that the process of decolonization was possibly one of the landmark events of the twentieth century, but it was moving ahead slowly, particularly in the Territories that

remained non-self-governing. The General Assembly's numerous resolutions merely underscored the great importance attached by the international community to the realization of the right of peoples to self-determination. Yemen, too, supported the realization of the right to self-determination and fully shared the concern of other delegations over the delays in accomplishing that objective.

61. All peoples living under colonial occupation enjoyed the inalienable right to self-determination irrespective of the Territory's population size, geographical position or limited natural resources. Yemen was ready to support all efforts aimed at effective implementation of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the proposal for the declaration of a Second International Decade and the right of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to full compensation for losses suffered during their time under foreign occupation and the return of their cultural property.

62. Yemen called on the administering Powers to do everything possible to promote visiting missions to the Territories under their administration and to work for the socio-economic development of the Territories. The Special Committee, as one of the organs of the United Nations, had the right to expect constant financial support from the interested parties to enable it to perform the tasks incumbent upon it. Expressing gratitude to those countries and organizations that were cooperating in providing various forms of assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, Yemen called on them to take an active part in the work of the Special Committee, including at its upcoming session, with a view to coordinating their efforts.

63. **Ms. Smith** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the United Kingdom's position on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) was well known and had been expressed most recently by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations in his statement to the General Assembly on 21 September 2000.

Requests for hearings (Aide-mémoire 1/00)

64. The Chairman drew attention to aide-mémoire 1/00 which listed 21 requests for hearings on agenda item 18 and announced that an additional request for a hearing on the question of Western Sahara had been received.

65. **Mr. Zakhid** (Morocco), addressing the Secretariat, said he was surprised to see that the posts held by some of the petitioners had not been included in the list of those requesting hearings. He was referring in particular to two tribal heads who had taken part in the voter identification process in Western Sahara and had returned to Morocco, as well as to the former head of a women's association in Tindouf. His remark likewise related to an official who had formerly been responsible for a refugee camp in Tindouf and the leaders of a group dealing with human rights in the French National Assembly.

66. Clarification was needed regarding the duration of time for which the identification badges that allowed petitioners to enter United Nations Headquarters were valid and the Secretariat department that was responsible for giving out such badges. Lastly, he inquired as to whether petitioners could hold badges for periods that exceeded the duration of the Committee's session.

67. The Secretary of the Committee pointed out that badges for petitioners were given out by the Protocol and Liaison Services exclusively for the time period during which the Special Committee was to hear the petitioners, namely not more than two days, unless the Committee decided to devote more than two meetings to the hearing of a given petitioner. The issuance of badges to petitioners for longer time periods was not subject to any other considerations by the Secretariat.

68. **Mr. Zakhid** (Morocco) asked for clarification as to how some petitioners had been able to acquire badges for longer time periods and who was responsible, and requested information about the procedural rules for statements by petitioners.

69. The Secretary of the Committee said that the Secretariat would look into the first matter and try to ascertain from the Protocol and Liaison Services how the situation might have arisen. On the second matter, he said the applicable rules accorded 10 minutes for each petitioner's statement.

70. **The Chairman** suggested that, in accordance with the usual practice, the requests that had been received for hearings should be circulated as Committee documents and considered at one of the next meetings.

71. *It was so decided.*

72. **The Chairman** suggested that, in view of the time constraints and in conformity with the approved timetable for the Committee's work, any additional requests for hearings should be processed as Committee documents and considered at the following meeting.

73. *It was so decided.*

74. **The Chairman** announced that he had received communications from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, the Governor of Guam and the representative of the Virgin Islands of the United States of America, who wished to make statements on Gibraltar, Guam and the specialized agencies, respectively.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.